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OCI No. 2430/62

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
27 October 1962

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Soviet Communications to the US of
26-27 October

1. In response to your request, there follows an analysis, prepared jointly by ONE-OCI, of the two Soviet letters to the US of 26 and 27 October.

2. The likeliest explanation of Soviet behavior in addressing two inconsistent letters to the President in such short succession is that, some time after dispatching the first, the Soviet leaders came to believe that the US intended firm or even radical action against the Cuban bases at a fairly early date. They evidently felt it imperative to send and publicize a second letter, containing a more specific proposal, but one still involving substantial Soviet concessions, in an effort to generate pressures which would head off this US action or, if this failed, to make it as costly as possible in political terms.

3. The US reply today leaves the USSR in a difficult position. The Soviets can, if they choose, repeat their Cuba-Turkey offer and complain that US preconditions amount to an unacceptable ultimatum, but they probably now recognize that this may not deflect the US from its insistence that the sites be immediately dismantled. Or they can alter tactics radically, going over to a threatening line in their statements and buttressing this with a deliberate maritime incident in the Caribbean and moves to globalize the crisis, e.g., some action against Berlin. Their tactics to date, however, and their apparent belief that the US is determined on further actions, argue strongly against this latter course.

4. A third course would be to accept some of the conditions stated by the US today and to continue the search for negotiations which would lay inhibitions on further US unilateral moves. Already, in

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return for a removal of weapons from Turkey, calculated to raise doubts in that country and in NATO as a whole concerning the US commitment, the Soviets have now offered substantial concessions. These include not only the withdrawal of offensive weapons from Cuba, but inspection of the process and a time limit volunteered by the USSR. In the process, the Soviets have gone far to acknowledge the truth of the President's original charges. As another result, they have made statements which must seriously undermine Castro's confidence in Soviet support, and even Soviet intentions.

5. Thus the next Soviet position may be less demanding than the Cuba-Turkey swap. We think that they might limit their demands to a US undertaking not to pursue Castro's overthrow. In return, they might agree to cease work on those sites which are not yet operational and to discuss means of "rendering the weapons inoperable," and to move toward some form of international inspection.

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